



Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture

NCD&CS Food Distribution Monthly E-Notification

May 2013

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Grant Awarded to install new cooler in the Salisbury NC Warehouse

After a lengthy application and review process, plans were drawn up and approved. As of April 2013, the Salisbury Food Distribution Warehouse now has a large cooler. This will enable Salisbury to handle large loads of cheese as well as fresh N.C. fruits and vegetables. This is critical to our ever-growing Farm to School Program.



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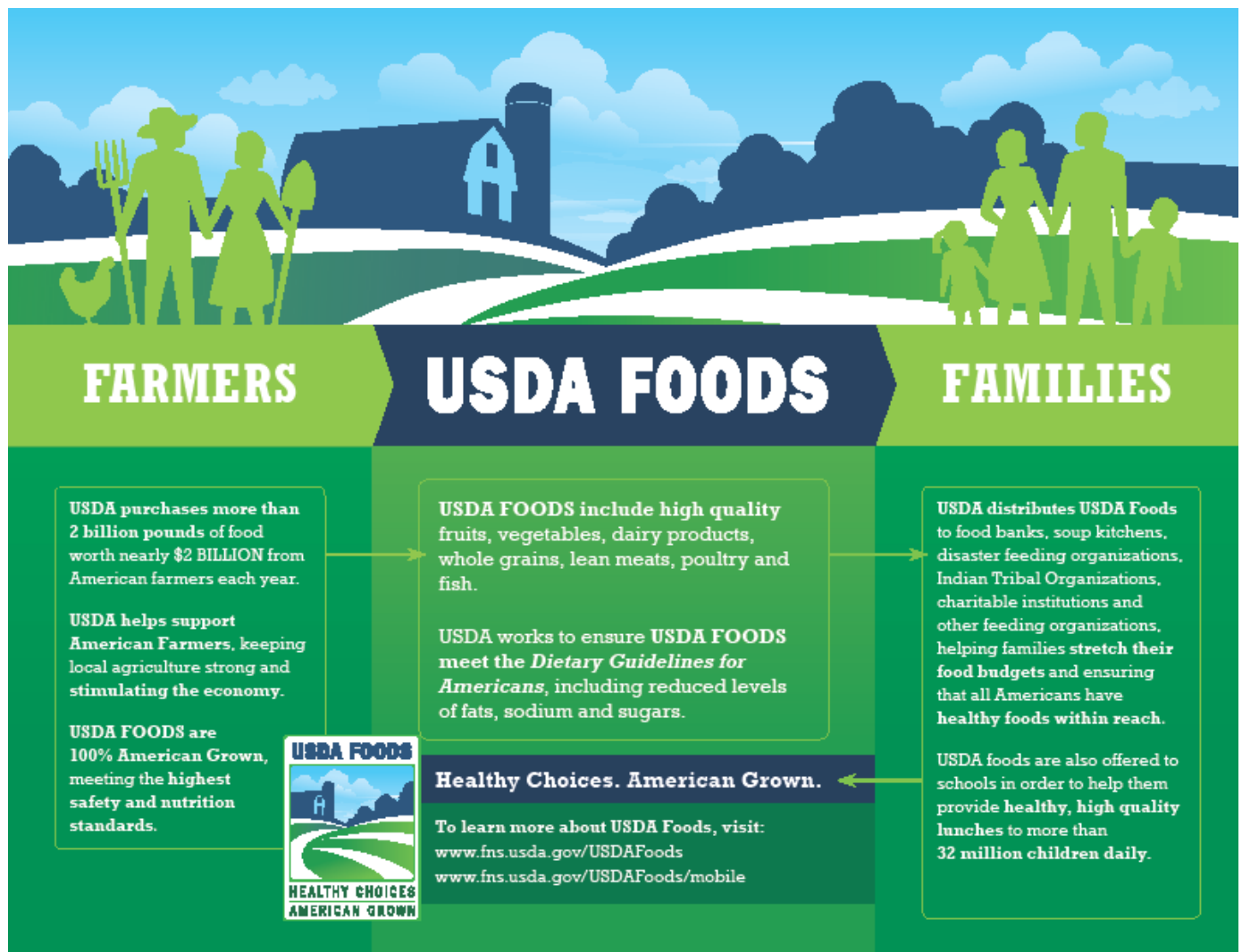
NFSMI Free Online training options:

Tony Wilkins

National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) has developed a fantastic free online training tool that covers many topics that touch us daily. Follow this link: <http://www.nfsmi.org/> and you can look and see if any of these topics may be of use to you and your staff.

NFSMI mission is to provide information and services that promote the continuous improvement of child nutrition services.

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School nutrition directors get to see Farm to School produce up close

Three child nutrition directors who serve on the seven-member Farm to School Advisory Committee recently toured farms in Nash and Wilson counties to see the farming operations of James Sharp Farms and Spring Acres Sales Company along with some of the fresh produce soon to arrive at schools across the state.

The group saw the packing houses for [Fresh-Pik Produce](#), a Sharp Farms company, and Spring Acres, plus one of Sharp Farms' greenhouses full of watermelon seedlings. Visitors learned more about these family farms and what is involved in growing produce that is part of the Farm to School program. The child nutrition directors asked questions about food safety, company history and size and production costs.

Sharp explained that he employs 16 full-time employees and 70 seasonal workers on his farm. Much of his seasonal help comes through the H-2A worker program, which allows foreign nationals to enter the United States for temporary agricultural work. The workers are critical to his farm, he said.

“Ya’ll would not get anything from this farm without this program,” Sharp said.



Workers at James Sharp Farms plant watermelons.

Jobs must first be advertised locally and must be offered to any American worker. Sharp said he has few local takers each year and those who do seek employment with him typically do not stay for the whole season. Farmers can request workers from a previous year if they are still in the program and Sharp said his farm has about a 95 percent return ratio.

Food safety is a top priority in all aspects of the farming operation from the field to the packing house. “With food safety, every employee has to be trained before he can even go into the field,” he said. In addition to

worker training and traceability through detailed record keeping, in-plant testing is also now part of his regular operation.

Nutrition directors were able to see the fields where Sharp raises strawberries and Romaine lettuce that are featured on school lunch menus in April and May. Both crops are grown on rows of black plastic.

While the strawberries still needed more time to ripen, the cheery bright green Romaine lettuce looked salad ready; bunch after perfectly shaped bunch.



Rows of Romaine lettuce will be harvested and shipped to schools as part of the N.C. Farm to School program.

One of the interesting stops was at a Sharp Farms greenhouse full of watermelon plants in small float trays. Sharp expected those watermelon plants would plant a 50-acre field.



Farm visitors check out a greenhouse full of watermelon plants at James Sharp Farms.

[Spring Acres Sales Company](#) in Spring Hope is one of the Farm to School program's sweet potatoes providers. This family-owned business has about 4,000 acres in production, with the bulk in sweet potatoes.

During the visit, the nutrition directors saw potatoes moving through the packing house on various conveyors where they were washed, sorted and packed. During harvest, workers pre-grade potatoes in the field into canning, Number 1's and Jumbos.



Workers sort sweet potatoes at Spring Acres Sales Company in Spring Hope.

In the past, school systems have ordered Jumbos, but have found that Number 1's are better suited for school lunches. Some canning potatoes are planted for next season's sweet potato crop, while others could end up in baby foods or other processed sweet potato items.



Sweet potatoes from Spring Acres Sales Company are ready for shipment.

One field near the business is where sweet potato plants were growing under clear plastic sheets in an almost greenhouse-like environment. Workers will come back through the field and clip off the green growth and those rootless cuttings will eventually grow into plants.

In 2012, the Farm to School program topped \$1 million in sales for the first time, featuring fruits and vegetables from the mountains to the coast. Apple slices, strawberries and blueberries are among the most popular offerings.



Farmer James Sharp, right, answers Alison Francis' questions about this year's strawberry crop. Francis is the child nutrition director with the Haywood County School System.

Article compliments of: Andrea Ashby, Assistant Director, NCDA&CS Public Affairs

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- View Bob's List from our web page, click under Food Distribution Highlights. All items on the list are first come first serve.
- <http://www.ncagr.gov/fooddist/Highlights/BobList.htm>
- We have had many positive comments about this tool, as it has proven to be helpful for schools to move slow moving USDA foods in their districts, and assisted us in offering you our surplus.
- We will be using Bob's List to deplete our remaining inventory so that our warehouses are empty by June 30, 2013. Keep watch for the Bob's List Update notices, even if you do not have entitlement dollars remaining.
- Bob's List is winding down for this school year. Currently there are three surplus items and seven school listings.
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- Order period deadlines in which orders must be submitted in NC-ECOS is May 1, 2013.
- You will see the respective products due by each date once you view the product catalog.
- We hope you have found NC-ECOS to be more user friendly due to the several enhancements that were made to the program.
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- After 28 years with NCDA, Kenny elected to take his retirement package. Over the 28 year period, we estimate that Kenny drove in excess of 1 million miles.
- Kenny was often making special delivery runs, for example, the National Christmas Tree from a North Carolina Christmas Tree Farm to the White House in Washington, DC in 2012.



- The deadline for the Summer Food Service Program was April 24, 2013. We had 33 school systems sign up.
- Orders were to be entered in NC-ECOS for the first time for this program to assist you in tracking and reporting at year end.
- Open Reports and print the Summer Foodservice 209 Report for your auditors.

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- One truck of apple slice just arrived, so if you have seen apple slices on your 209 Report all year, we will have them to you shortly.
- Canned Sweet potatoes are (past) due in April 29. We will be delivering these along with the apple slices.
- The big rush on Bob's List from last week will also be riding along the above deliveries.

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Festival Event: May 17-19, 2013

Join your friends and family for three great days of down-home celebration North Carolina-style at the 2013 Got to Be NC Festival at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds



Admission and Parking are FREE

Festival Map [\(click here\)](#)



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Greensboro, NC / Koury Center / Sheraton

NCDA Advisory Council Meeting: June 18, 2013

NC SNA Conference: JUNE 19-21, 2013

http://www.sna-nc.org/2013_Calendar_of_Events.doc



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Week of May 6th – Strawberries, Romaine Lettuce

Week of May 13th – Strawberries

Week of May 20th – Strawberries, Blueberries

Record Deliveries for 2013

Preliminary figures for Strawberries: Week 1 – 6,157 flats

Week 2 – 5,624 flats

Week 3 – 2,944 flats

Week 4 – 4,314 flats

Total – **19,039 flats** x \$14.00 = \$266,546.00

This is another new record order, last year total was 14,304 flats.

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